



Challenges in Resiliency with College-Age Students

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Why focus on college-aged adults?


- 20% of young adults meet diagnostic criteria for a psychiatric disorder
- Nearly ½ of college-age adults report mental health concerns
- Late adolescence/young adulthood represents a peak age of risk for onset of:
 - Depression
 - Mania
 - Psychosis
 - Panic Disorder
 - Substance Use Disorders



Risk Factors



- Relative freedom from institutional control with loss of structure and support
- Instability in involvement in work and school
- Parenting challenges (autonomy vs. support)
- This age spends more of their leisure time alone than any other age group aside from the elderly
- Peers greatly influence decision-making
- Vulnerability to impulsivity or poor decision-making
- Risk taking and short-term reward vs. societal expectations



COVID-19 Related Stressors



Loss of daily structure and routine



Anxiety about illness in self and others



Financial concerns



Loss of peers and teachers



Loss of meaningful activities and goals



Developmentally inappropriate living conditions

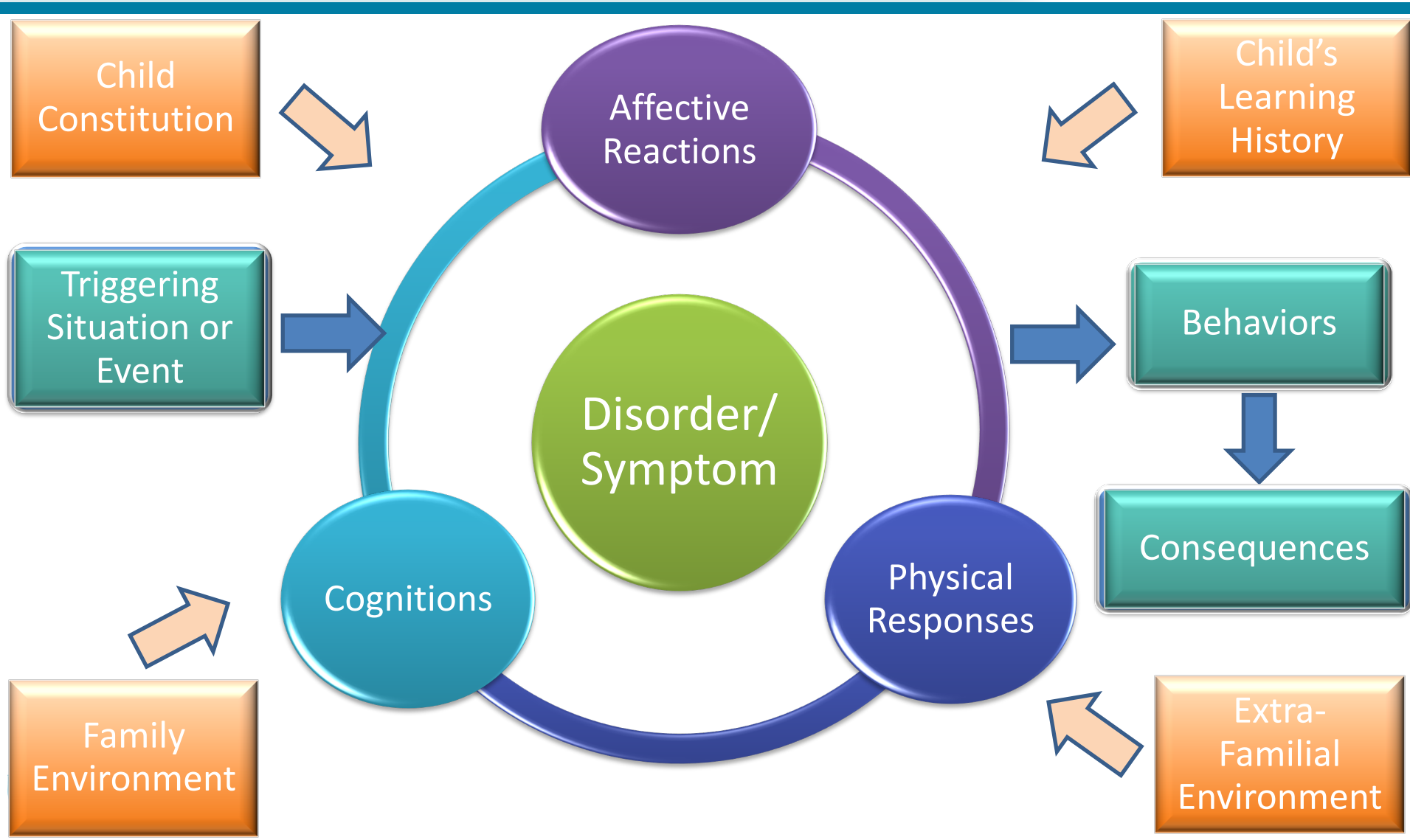


Insecurity about the future

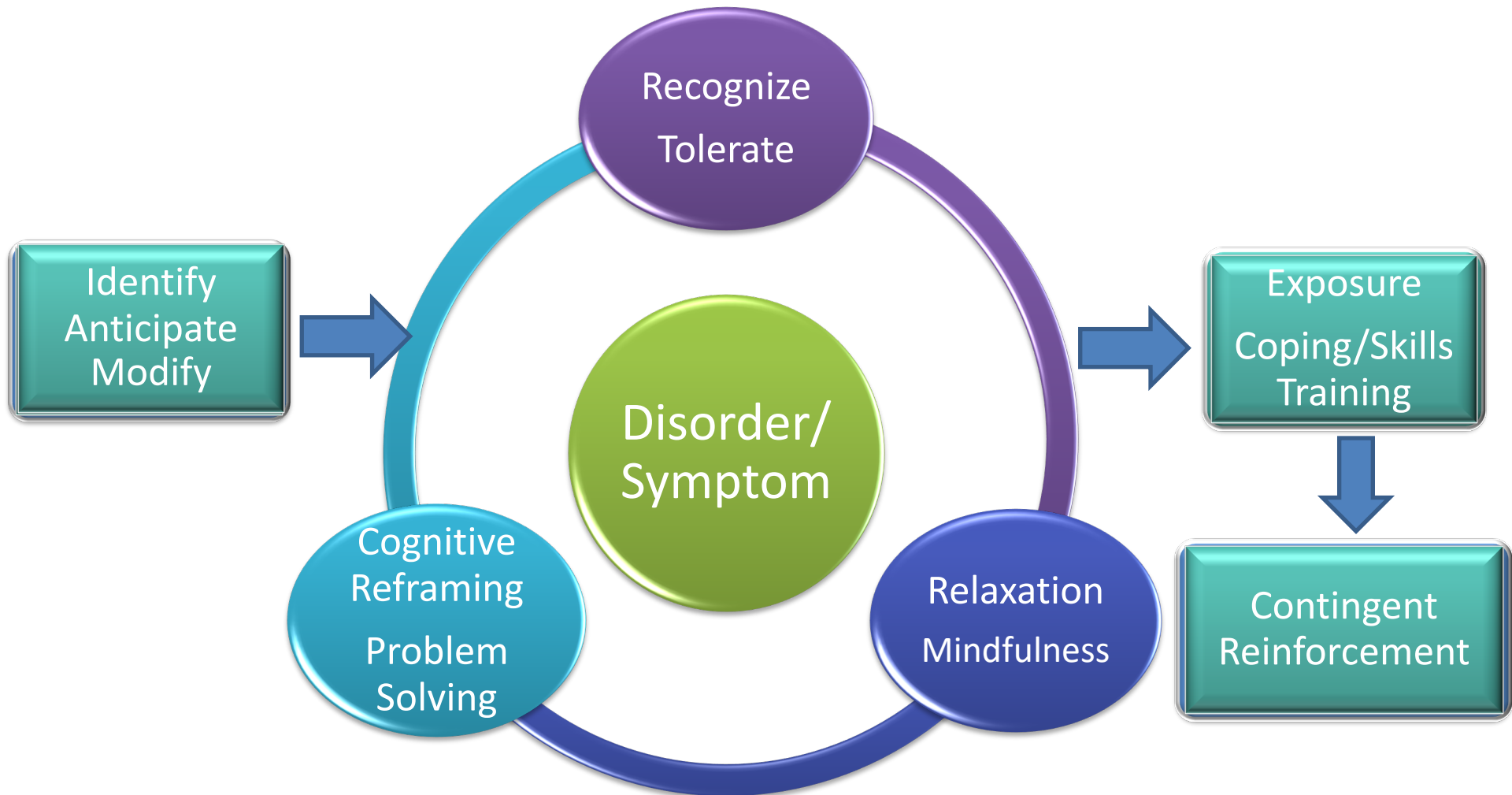


Specific, individual concerns, especially among vulnerable individuals

CBT Case Formulation



CBT Model: General Treatment Approaches



Affective Education

- Recognize emotions (fear, anxiety)
- Recognize, label, and self-monitor physiologic/affective cues
- What are situational triggers?
- What are affective reactions?
- What are physiological “warning signs”?
- Noticing without judging or changing



Techniques to Reduce Physiologic Arousal

- Breathing (4:4:4 technique)
- Guided relaxation or meditation
- Mindfulness
- Exercise (get creative)
- Sleep hygiene



Cognitive Strategies: Theoretical Underpinnings



Goals:

- Identify negative/anxious/distorted cognitions
- Develop alternate, more realistic/helpful ways of viewing situations
- Develop a neutral, non-judgmental approach to thoughts

Integrating Compassion into Cognitive Skills Training

Recognizing harsh, perfectionistic, overly critical self-talk

Developing a more compassionate, gentler approach to oneself (and others)

- “I’m doing the best that I can. It has to be enough”
- “My body is strong and powerful”
- “Those thoughts about being a bad person are just an old mental habit that don’t apply”

Fostering gratitude

Be aware of a surprising amount of resistance to this concept



Behavioral Activation

- Identify activities that lead to a sense of well being and/or mastery
- Develop a plan to increase these activities
- Create routines
- Problem solve around potential difficulties (e.g., low energy, lack of motivation)

Strengths-Focused Approach



- Identify and appreciate young adult strengths
- Identify periods of well-being and pleasantness
- Focus on increasing self-efficacy
- Identify goals and values
 - Structure intervention targets and behaviors to be consistent with these goals

Use of Social Media/ Technology



Mental Health Resources

- MGH Guide to Mental Health During COVID-19
<https://www.massgeneral.org/psychiatry/guide-to-mental-health-resources>
- Child Mind Institute (childmind.org)
- The Hope Center (hope4college.com)
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America (adaa.org)
- Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (abct.org)